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Minnesota Area Vocational Schools Enter Into New Program in Agricultural Education

By S. K. WICK, Assistant Director of
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The area schools in Minnesota have been gradually developing since the passage of the act establishing such institutions in 1945. At the present time there are eight such schools located at Thief River Falls, Duluth, St. Cloud, St. Paul, Minneapolis, Mankato, Austin, and Winona.

During the first years of operation of the program in these schools, the principal development has been in trade and business education. Home economics courses have been well established at the high school and adult level. While practically all of these schools have well-developed agricultural programs serving the district needs, there was little done about expanding the agricultural program in the larger areas served by these schools. Traditionally, the agriculture program has been a local community school program serving the farm people in rural areas.

It has become apparent that adult education in Farm Management offers an excellent opportunity for service by the area schools. This program has been developed around the use of uniform farm records and the analysis of these records to provide basic teaching content for adult and young farmer classes. Analyses of the uniform farm records have been carried on by the University of Minnesota for the past twenty-seven years. In 1952 it was proposed that this service be extended through the agriculture departments of the public schools in Minnesota.

The new plan for the operation of this program involves provision for analysis, coordination and other services for the Farm Management program in the area vocational schools to supplement the Uni-

versity of Minnesota. Each area school participating in the program will employ a qualified agriculture instructor to work as coordinator with the local agriculture instructors in the surrounding area in the development of this program. They will be available on call to assist teachers in the promotion and use of the Minnesota Farm Account Books. The coordinator will collect the books at the end of the year, make the analysis promptly and return the results to the teachers so they can be effectively used in their teaching programs. Through this cooperative endeavor the number of farmers using the Minnesota Farm Account Book can be increased tenfold. The immediate benefit will be practical, useable instructional material, and the ultimate result will be better farming. The staff of the Agricultural Economics Department of the University of Minnesota has given support and cooperation in the new direction that this program is taking. They have expressed their desire to help in every way possible. Their main interest is to get useable data from the Farm Account Books for further research. It is expected that the development of regional analysis centers at the area vocational schools will supply much more useable data.

While there are high hopes of accomplishing much more under this new plan, it is realized that the success of it will depend primarily on the local agriculture instructor's willingness to get in and pitch and utilize this service of the area schools. At the present time, such services are available at Thief River Falls, Mankato, Austin, and Winona. Duluth started a similar program on July 1 of this year.

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Are Consolidated Schools Short-changing the Country Child?

By PAUL WOODRING*

The farm child in America is entitled to an education which is every bit as good as that available to the child in the largest city and which at the same time takes advantage of the rural setting and is adapted to the special needs of rural children. We can have such an education if members of local school boards will follow a few basic principles:

1. See to it that the school curriculum is planned by people who know something about country life and country children—what they already know and what they need to know. For example, training in vocational agriculture should be available for all who want it.

2. School activities and afterschool activities should be planned with the children's working hours in mind.

Farm children still have, and *should* have, at least a few regular chores to do at home, and the child should not find it necessary to miss interesting and educational activities at school because of these home responsibilities.

3. While you recognize the special needs of rural children do not overlook the fact that many of these children will attend colleges and universities and some of them will become city adults. Their education should prepare them both to live as enlightened country men and women and, if they choose, to live comfortably with their city cousins.

4. Build the best school building your community can afford but don't spend so

much on the building that you must hire a poor teacher or let a good teacher get along on an inadequate salary. If you *must* choose, a good teacher in a poor building can do more for your children than a poor teacher in the best of buildings. However, if your school building is *too* bad the good teacher will probably avoid your school.

5. After you have invested many thousands of dollars in a building don't make the mistake of trying to save the few extra dollars it will take to buy some essential equipment.

6. See that your school has good lighting in the classrooms. A few dollars spent on light may save many more dollars in bills from the oculist or optometrist. Good heating and ventilation may save in doctors' bills later.

7. After you have hired good teachers, give them a fair chance to develop a good school. They should listen to the opinions of the parents and be influenced by them, but they can't please them all. The school board and the reasonable citizens should protect the teachers from the busybodies and the pressure groups who make unreasonable and conflicting demands.

8. There is no reason to jump on every bandwagon, and the fact that something new is called "progressive" does not always mean that it is sound; but neither does the fact that something was taught in one particular way when you and I were in school mean that it ought to be taught that way today. Don't be afraid to let the teacher try out a new teaching method now and then. You don't operate your farm just as you did in 1920, and the teacher shouldn't be expected to teach just as he did in 1920 either.

9. If you now have a one- or a two-room school you may profitably give some thought to the advantages and the disadvantages of consolidation. If you live in a region of small farms and comparatively dense population, such consolidation is usually more economical in the long run and may make for better education if the schools are properly planned. However, if you live in a region of large ranches or in mountainous areas, you may find that consolidation will cause your child to spend so many hours on the bus that it is better to improve your local school.

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10. If you find consolidation impractical because of the distances involved, that does not mean that you must be satisfied with a poor school. If you have a good teacher, a modern building and some essential equipment, a one-room school can provide excellent elementary education, particularly if there are not too many children.

A good farm home in a prosperous and enlightened rural community is probably the best place in the world for a child to grow up. Even the child from the best kind of home will need at least twelve years of good schooling if he is to be prepared to meet the problems of living in the United States in the coming half century. There is no good reason why our country schools should not provide farm children with the best education available to any child anywhere.

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About School District Reorganization

This republic of the United States of America depends upon a system of universal public education for the preservation of freedom and democracy. This requires a public school system that can keep pace with changes in communication, transportation and other physical and social developments. Therefore, it seems highly improbable that one can arrive at a reasonable conclusion *against* school district reorganization. Professor Woodring's article does a service in raising certain questions and pointing out certain areas that need attention. *The Visitor* is of the opinion that the program of reorganization of school districts in Minnesota is in its infancy. A great deal more needs to be done. Anyone interested in improving educational opportunity for all our people must guard against the false notion that reorganization is ever completely done. It is a continuous process of adjustment to changing conditions. To all those who have worked so hard in carrying forward the program of school district reorganization to its present status, *The Visitor* offers its congratulations.

Excerpts from the President's Report

by CLARENCE HEMMING,
Retiring President, Minnesota Vocational
Agriculture Instructors' Association

An organization gains its reputation from the activities of the members and the actions that the organization takes. I would like to pinpoint some of the overall accomplishments during the year just past.

The Newsletter has served to keep our members informed of the work that the association has been doing. Copies of this publication go to all of the states of the Union. They go to many of our friends outside of our own group. Note this well! Through these copies we have built some enduring friendships—friendships that we need.

The Farm Management Service has grown this year. The Adult Education Committee has actively cooperated with Mr. Granger in building a pattern for its future growth.

The Legislative Committee has worked to guard our appropriations and to secure increases for vocational education as well as for education as a whole.

Our first research has been initiated. The results should prove very useful to you personally.

Our relationships with other organizations and institutions have been promoted and advanced. The State Policies Committee meetings with representatives of the superintendents and principals have borne fruit through better understandings. Our relationships with farm organizations have been strengthened. Further work and study is needed and is being done.

We have become a corporate organization. With this change, we are exhibiting greater strength and as members we will gain many advantages. These are some of the highlights of the year.

Where do we go from here?

Our membership in 1954-55 was at an all time high. It was divided as follows: 253 Vo-Ag teachers (87% of the total), 67 veteran instructors, 25 students (U. of M.), 14 affiliate and 21 associate members for a total of 380.

Is this good? Yes. Is it good enough? No! Why can't we in agriculture achieve 100 per cent membership in our organization—an organization which does so much for its members and which could do so much more if everyone were a member? I hope that every instructor, be he in the high school or veterans' program, will become a member and see to it that everyone he knows in the profession is also a member.

What are some of the real problems which are confronting our profession and our association and what should we do about them?

First of all, it's time that we quit looking at our organization as a "babe in the woods." We have "grown up." We are a responsible group. We have influence (and therefore responsibility) far beyond what most of us realize. It's time that we really take stock of ourselves—look around us to see what is going on and proceed to do something. Almost every agriculture instructor has done a wonderful job of building a strong program in his local community. We have every reason to believe that Minnesota is a leader in agricultural education. Each man has built a solid foundation of support in his local community.

As an organization we have not done as much as we might have in building a good public relations program on the state and national level. The reasons for this are not easy to arrive at, but I should like to point out a few and suggest an action program.

We are expecting our organization to do a lot with "coffee money." Most of us spend more for our morning and/or afternoon coffee in one year than we spend on our professional organization, and we gripe because the public doesn't come through with more tax money for education! Where is our sense of values?

With anything less than 100 per cent membership we really don't deserve as much as we get. We are asking a few to sacrifice time and money.

We ought to be planning our income and our program so that the officers will have both the time and the money to carry on a real program of public relations for us.

During the past year as your president, I have attended 22 meetings as your representative. I have traveled over 4200 miles not including a flight to San Francisco as one of your delegates to the AVA and NVATA National Conventions. I have spent 42 days away from my work in the Alexandria department. These trips have cost over \$700. Our organization has paid only about \$75 of this cost. Over 180 letters have been written from my office as your representative.

I am neither complaining nor bragging. What I do want to point out is that if we really want to get the most out of our association, we should be doing some thinking about a full time executive secretary. One cannot simultaneously carry a full time job in a local school community and give our organization the best service and representation in building a public relations program. To me this is the number one job of a professional organization.

We have lost some real opportunities to further our public relations because we were not able to attend many meetings to which we were invited and where someone present might have done a real job of furthering a better understanding of vocational education in agriculture.

We are approaching some years of real decision. We must have a strong voice if we are to keep the public schools from becoming a secondary force in education for farm people. We are going to have to be a lot stronger and have a much greater public understanding of our program in the next five years than we have ever had before. Forces are on the move today in numbers greater than ever before and in places of much greater influence than ever before to make vocational agriculture a very minor force in education for rural people.

We have built strong local programs with wonderful local support, but we cannot expect those voices to reach places where some important decisions affecting our programs will be made. Our program will survive only if we have an organized voice to speak where we will be heard clearly and then only if we have promoted understandings among other groups so that they too know our objectives and will speak with and for us.

We need much more top level public relations. Our association in Minnesota did a great deal of this work in 1954-55. It has won us many friends and created an atmosphere of understanding, but more could have been done. I hope that next year's board will provide sufficient funds with which to do more public relations work and will tackle the problem of the personnel to do the job.

We need to strengthen ourselves through membership and activities in the AVA and NVATA and the MVA. All are working for us on the state and national level. The NVATA is young. It too lacks adequate funds. I would recommend that we continue to work wholeheartedly with this group.

Some initial contacts have been made with the Rural Education Department of the NEA. There seems to be a good prospect that we can strengthen our cause through some working relationship with them. I would recommend that we actively investigate these possibilities.

The Farm Management Service approach to adult education is an area that is going to demand much promotion and work in the coming years. On this program is going to rest our case as to whether vocational agriculture is a vital force in the training of adult farmers. We need greater support from the State Department of Education than we have had. We are going to have to depend on their helping us at the local level to sell the program to our local administrators.

The greatest obstacle to maximum progress is manpower. A single instructor with a full high school schedule cannot be expected to carry this load indefinitely. To make this program really serve farm people in our communities is going to require more multiple-teacher departments. We are in great need of an appraisal of the teacher-load standards in agriculture, and we are going to have to have some real help to convince our administrators and boards that this program is vital, and that adult education in agriculture is properly a high-priority responsibility of the public schools. Our State Department of Education should have the responsibility and the opportunity to give us the needed assistance.

An exciting challenge confronts you agriculture instructors who are working with veterans. You have been doing just the best type of adult education with your veterans. You have a real challenge to start the Farm Management Service by enrolling your veterans and seeing to it that they continue when they have exhausted their training time. Everyone of you ought to be a MVAIA member. Many of you ought to have your eyes on being an additional vo-ag man in the local department. You are the natural person to continue this work with the adults. Are you going to accept the challenge?

My sincere best wishes to the new officers. I am sure they will carry the work of the association forward. I hope that I have represented you well this year. It's been a happy experience and an education in itself. I thank you for the opportunity and I will, as your past president, continue to work for the MVAIA and for vocational agriculture in the public schools.

The Role of Instructional Resources*

by JOHN A. ROLLOFF

Students, whatever their age, school, community or country must be stimulated into learning situations if we as educators are to help instigate and guide constructive learning. Such learning utilizes experiences found in the home and community upon which the student may build creatively. Those of us in agricultural education are perhaps more fortunate than our brothers in other areas of education, as our opportunity to utilize the rich, varied, and encompassing environment of rural students into a desirable teaching situation is unlimited.

We must remember that learning is an individual experience which results in changed behavior and that it is a process of perception and integration. Accordingly, the senses of hearing, seeing, smelling, tasting, and touching, conceived in terms of experiences and enterprises having the

* Prepared as partial fulfillment for initiation to Eta Chapter of Phi Delta Kappa.

validity of real life situations, are the prerequisites to "doing" a task or skill, a changed value, or new knowledge, which are made available for integration to the individual's needs. The degree of integration is directly proportional to the senses through which a skill or value is perceived. Therefore, it is vitally essential that our creativeness and resourcefulness know no bounds, because the effectiveness with which we stimulate and guide the learning process is determined by these factors. Thus, it is also the task of the teacher to select and organize resource materials revealing the greatest degrees of perception, which will give the learner that development most helpful in meeting and controlling life situations. The method by which the learner works out those experiences should demand maximum self-direction, assumption of responsibility, and exercise of choice in terms of life values.

Instruction is a four step procedure of: (1) preparation, (2) presentation, (3) application or practice, (4) testing, evaluation, and follow-up. All are equally important; however, everything depends upon the manner in which it is accomplished. Fortunately, we can always depend upon nature, as we find it in our environment, to provide the basic ingredients for fruitful instruction. By "nature" is meant those basic elements of the universe, while physical elements supplemented by man are a portion of the whole, namely the "out-of-doors." It encompasses each step in the teaching procedure and for teachers of vocational agri-

culture it provides an opportunity to adapt our teaching to individuals as they deal with nature in their farming experiences. In short, it facilitates the teaching of farming the way a farmer farms. In order to accomplish this, teaching cannot be confined to the four walls of the classroom, but instead the out-of-doors becomes his real classroom. Here the instructor can present ideas and practices utilizing all the perceptive senses. At times this may not be possible, but it then becomes the responsibility of the instructor to bring nature into the classroom. We are quick to sense that not all instruction deals with plants, animals, or the physical features of the earth. However, the instruction of mechanical skills, managerial techniques and analysis can and must be related to some physical form in one or more steps.

The methods of teaching such as field trips, laboratory work, lectures, assignments, directed study, demonstrations, individualized instruction, discussion, and conference procedure, drills and etc., all must be directed toward the objectives of farming as a vocation. But these methods alone or together will not give the desired result unless the resources in the form of visual aids are most judiciously utilized in a bid to stimulate all the "senses" of the individual. All these "sense provoking" methods of instruction found in the out-of-doors classroom facilitate problem solving by the individual and when problems are solved or overcome, then learning has taken place.